

Thanne thoughte they, it was the beste reed,
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.
They seiden: Lord, the knyght ne hath nat
slayn
His felawe; heere he standeth hool alyve.
¶ Ye shul be deed, quod he, so moot I thryve!
That is to seyn, bothe oon, and two, and thre.
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he:
I dampned thee, thou most algate be deed;
And thou, also, most nedes lese thyne deyd,
For thou art cause why thy felawe deyth.
And to the thridde knyght right thus he seith:
Thou hast nat doon that I comanded thee.
And thus he dide doon sleen hem alle thre.
¶ Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
And ay delited hym to been a shrewe.
And so bifel a lord of his meynec,
That loved vertuous moralitee,
Seide on a day bitwene hem two right thus:
¶ A lord is lost, if he be vicious;
And dronkenesse is eek a foul record
Of any man, and namely in a lord.
Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere,
Awaityng on a lord, and he noot where,
For Goddes love, drynk moore attemprely;
Wyn maketh man to lesen wrecchedly
His mynde, and eek his lymes everichon.
¶ The revers shaltou se, quod he, anon;
And preeve it, by thyn owene experience,
That wyn ne dooth to folk no swich offence.
Ther is no wyn bireveth me my myght
Of hand ne foot, ne of myne eyen sight.
¶ And, for despit, he drank ful muchel moore
An hondred part than he hadde doon bifore;
And right anon, this irous, cursed wrecche
Lete this knyghtes sone bifore hym feeche,
Comandyng hym he sholde bifore hym stonde.
And sodeyntly he took his bowe in honde,
And up the streng he pulled to his ere,
And with an arwe he slow the child right there.
¶ Now, whether have I a siker hand or noon?
Quod he, is al my myght and mynde agon?
Hath wyn byreveth me myne eyen sight?
¶ What sholde I telle thanswere of the knyght?
His sone was slayn, ther is namore to seye.
Beth war, therfore, with lordes how ye pleye.
Syngeth Placebo, and I shal, if I kan,
But if it be unto a povre man.
To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,
But nat to a lord, though he sholde go to helle.
¶ Lo, irous Cyrus, thilke Percien,
How he destroyed the ryver of Gysen,
for that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,
Whan that he wente Babylaigne to wyne.
He made that the ryver was so smal
That wommen myghte wade it over al.
¶ Lo, what seyde he that so wel techen kan:
Ne be no felawe to an irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the weye,
Lest thee repente; ther is namore to seye.
¶ Now Thomas, leve brother, lef thyne ire;
Thou shalt me fynde as just as is a squyre.
Hooold nat the develes knyf ay at thyne herte;

Thyn angre dooth thee al to soore smerte,
But shewe to me al thy confessioun.
¶ Nay, quod the sike man, by Seint Symoun!
I have be shryven this day at my curat;
I have hym toold al hoolly myn estat.
Nedeth namore to speken of it, seith he,
But if me list, of myn humylitee.
¶ Yif me thanne of thy gold, to make oure
cloystre,
Quod he, for many a muscle and many an oyste,
Whan othere men han ben ful wel at eyse,
Hath been oure fooode, our cloystre for to reyse.
And yet, God woot, unnethe the fundement
Parfourned is, ne of our pavement
Nys nat a tyle yet withinne oure wones;
By God, we owen fourty pound for stones!
Now help, Thomas, for hym that harwed helle!
for elles moste we oure bookes selle,
And if ye lakke oure predicacioun,
Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun,
for whoso wolde us fro this world bireve,
So God me save, Thomas, by your leve,
He wolde bireve out of this world the sonne;
for who kan techen, and werchen, as we konne?
And that is nat of litel tyme, quod he,
But syn that Elie was, or Elisee,
Han freres been, that fynde I of record,
In charitee, ythanked be our Lord.
Now Thomas, help, for seinte charitee!
And down anon he sette hym on his knee.
¶ His sike man wex wel ny wood for ire;
He wolde that the frere had been on
fire
¶ With his false dissymulacioun,
Swich thyng as is in my possessioun,
Quod he, that may I yeven, and noon oother.
Ye sey me thus, how that I am youre brother?
¶ Ye, certes, quod the frere, trusteth weel;
I took oure dame oure lettre with oure seel.
¶ Now wel, quod he, and somewhat shal I yeve
Unto youre hooly covent whil I lyve,
And in thyne hand thou shalt it have anon;
On this condicioun, and oother noon;
That thou departe it so, my leve brother,
That every frere have also muche as oother.
This shaltou swere on thy professioun,
Withouthen fraude or cavillacioun.
¶ I swere it, quod this frere, by my feith!
¶ And therewithal his hand in his he leith:
Lo, heer my feith! in me shal be no lak.
¶ Now thanne, put thyne hand down by myn bak,
Seide this man, and grope wel bihynde;
Bynethe my buttoke ther shaltow fynde
A thyng that I have hyd in pryvete.
¶ A! thoughte this frere, this shal go with me!
And down his hand he launcheth to the clifte,
In hope for to fynde there a yifte.
And whan this sike man felte this frere
Aboute his tuwel grope there and heere,
Amydde his hand he leet the frere a fart.
Ther nys no capul, drawyng in a cart,
That myghte have lete a fart of swich a soun.

¶ The frere up stirte as dooth a wood leoun;
A false chert, quod he, for Goddes bones!
This hastow for despit doon, for the nones!
Thou shalt abyte this fart, if that I may!
¶ His meynec, whiche that herden this affray,
Cam lepyng in, and chaced out the frere;
And forth he gooth, with a ful angry cheere,
And fette his felawe, theras lay his stoor.
He looked as it were a wilde boor;
He grynte with his teeth, so was he wrooth.
¶ STURDY paas down to the court he gooth,
Wheras ther woned a man of greet honour;
To whom that he was alwey confessour;
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere cam, as he were in a rage,
Wheras this lord sat etyng at his bord.
Unnethe myghte the frere speke a word,
Til atte laste he seyde: God yow see!
¶ This lord gan looke, and seide: Benedicitee!
What, frere John, what maner world is this?
I trowe som maner thyng ther is amys;
Ye looken as the wode were ful of thevys;
sit down anon, and tel me what youre greif is,
And it shal been amended, if I may.
¶ I have, quod he, had a despit this day,
God yelde yow! adoun in youre village,
That in this world is noon so povre a page,
That he nolde have abhomyacioun
Of that I have receyved in youre toun.
And yet ne greveth me nothing so soore,
As that this olde chert, with lokkes hoore,
Blasphemed hath oure hooly covent eke.
¶ Now, maister, quod this lord, I yow biseke.
No maister, sire, quod he, but servitour,
Though I have had in scole swich honour,
God liketh nat that Raby men us calle.
Neither in market ne in youre large halle.
¶ No fors, quod he, but tel me al youre greif.
¶ Sire, quod this frere, an odious meschief
This day bityd is to myn ordre and me;
And so per consequens to ech degree
Of hooly chirche, God amende it soone!
¶ IRE, quod the lord, ye woot what is to doone.
Distempere yow noght, ye be my confessour;
Ye been the salt of the erthe and the savour.
for Goddes love youre patience ye holde;
Tel me youre greif, ¶ And he anon hym tolde,
As ye han herd bifore, ye woot wel what.
¶ The lady of the hous ay stille sat
Til she had herd al what the frere sayde.
¶ Ey! Goddes mooder, quod she, blisful
mayde!
Is ther oght elles? telle me feithfully.
¶ Madame, quod he, how thynke ye herby?
¶ How that me thynketh? quod she; so God me
speede!
I seye, a cherle hath doon a cherles dede.
What shold I seye? God lat hym nevere thee!
His sike heed is ful of vanytee,
I hold hym in a manere frenesye.
¶ Madame, quod he, by God I shal nat lye;
But I on oother weyes may be wreke,
I shal disclaundre hym, overal ther I speke,

This false blasphemour, that charged me
To parte that wol nat departed be,
To every man yliche, with meschaunce!
¶ The lord gat stille, as he were in a traunce,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun:
How hadde this chert ymaginacioun,
To shewe swich a probleme to the frere?
Nevere erst er now herd I of swich mateere;
I trowe the devel putte it in his mynde.
In ars metrike shal ther no man fynde,
Bifore this day, of swich a questioun.
Certes, it was a shrewed conclusioun,
That every man sholde have yliche his part,
As of the soun or savour of a fart.
O nyce proude chert! I shrewe his face!
Lo, sires, quod the lord, with harde grace,
Who evere herd of swich a thyng er now?
To every man ylike! tel me how?
It is an impossible, it may nat be!
Ey, nyce chert, God lete him nevere thee!
The rumblyng of a fart, and every soun,
Nis but of eir reverberacioun,
And evere it wasteth lite and lite away.
Ther is no man kan demen, by my fey!
If that it were departed equally.
What, lo, my chert, lo, yet how shrewedly
Unto my confessour today he spak;
I holde hym certeyn a demonyak!
Now ete youre mete, and let the chert go pleye,
Lat hym go honge hymself a devel weye!

The wordes of the lordes Squier and his herve for
departyng of the fart on twelve.

¶ All stood the lordes Squier at the
bord,
That karf his mete, and herde, word
by word,
Of alle thynges whiche that I have
sayd;
My lord, quod he, beth nat yvele apayd;
I koude telle, for a gowne/clooth,
To yow, sire frere, so ye be nat wrooth,
How that this fart sholde evene dede be
Among youre covent, if it lyked me.
¶ Tel, quod the lord, and thou shalt have anon
A gowne/clooth, by God and by Seint John!
¶ My lord, quod he, whan that the wedder is fair,
Withouthen wynd or perturbyng of air,
Lat bryng a cartwheel here into this halle,
But looke that it have his spokes alle;
Twelve spokes hath a cartwheel comunty.
And bryng me thanne twelf freres, woot ye why?
for thrittene is a covent, as I gesse.
The confessour heere, for his worthynesse,
Shal parfourn up the nombre of his covent.
Thanne shal they knele doun, by oon assent,
And to every spokes ende, in this manere,
ful sadly leye his nose shal a frere.
Your noble confessour, there God hym save!
Shal hold his nose upright, under the nave.
Thanne shal this chert, with bely stif and toght
As any tabour, hyder been ybrought;
And sette hym on the wheel right of this cart,